PROFESSIONALISM AND COMMENTARY

Presidential Address: Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Pain Medicine

Editor’s Note:
Every year at the American Academy of Pain Medicine (AAPM) Annual Meeting, our presidents reflect on their year of leadership of the academy, as do the presidents of the Faculty of Pain Medicine, Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (FPMANZCA) and International Spine Intervention Society (ISIS) at their respective annual meetings. In words that often both inspire and aspire, these leaders note the achievements of our field but wisely counsel us about our present and future challenges. This year we begin the tradition of publishing the presidential address of the leaders of our three sponsoring organizations, AAPM, FPMANZCA, and ISIS.

Now more than ever, the world needs pain physicians and clinicians who are grounded in pain science. I am confident that this year’s meeting provided attendees with the latest science advancements in the treatment of pain and afforded them the opportunity to learn about new resources, as well as an excellent opportunity to connect with their colleagues.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank this year’s annual meeting co-chairs, Drs. Steven Stanos and Jeffrey Tiede and their committee. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their countless hours spent on planning this year’s meeting.

Our co-chairs brought together an excellent lineup of expert faculty who addressed the latest science and the most relevant topics facing pain practitioners today. They set the stage with evidence-based research and knowledge for both the clinician and the academician by delineating knowledge and presenting a balance of complex issues and straightforward clinical information to use in your pain practice. The meeting covered the gamut of pain medicine, from interventional and restorative to psychiatric and pharmalogic, and even included a look at how the military treats pain.

With issues surrounding pain in the news every day, our society needs us, more than ever, to maintain a strong stance as pain experts in the medical community. We know that more than 100 million Americans are suffering with chronic pain, and some of the treatments meant to help have been the sources for abuse and diversion. Now more than ever, our world needs pain physicians who understand the cadre of pain treatments: physicians who are grounded in pain science and can properly assess risk, navigate treatments, manage patients’ expectations, and supervise ongoing pain care. These patients need the hope that dedicated pain clinicians can offer . . . a hope for improved quality of life! The 2013 Annual Meeting equipped those practicing in the challenging field of pain medicine to treat patients suffering with pain.

This year’s meeting came at a pivotal time for not only people suffering with pain, but for you as a pain expert. Although recent media coverage, as well as regulation and legislation, has been unimodal in its coverage of the issues surrounding pain this past year, especially regarding opioid therapy, the academy has continued to focus on our core ideology to optimize the health of patients in pain and eliminate the major public health problem of pain by advancing the practice and the specialty of pain medicine. We have continued to advocate for safe utilization of opioid therapy, successfully launching our Safe Opioid Prescribing Course at the 2012 Annual Meeting, and subsequently presenting it live at the Florida Academy of Family Physicians Meeting last December. Some of our leaders and staff also had the opportunity to meet with officials at several government agencies regarding the academy’s efforts for safe utilization of opioid therapy, including meeting with Dr. Nora Volkow, director of National Institute of Drug Abuse, and Gil Kerlikowske, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Our leaders also met with officials from the Food and Drug Administration, the Substance Abuse, Mental Health Service Administration, as well as other government agencies.

As a multimodal, multidisciplinary medical specialty society, our message is broad based and our membership represents the diverse scope of the field of pain medicine. We will continue to be committed to the highest standards of patient care, the scholarship, science, and research of pain medicine, to upholding ethical standards and professional integrity, while advancing public health.

The academy continues to focus on our vision of being the recognized authority for appropriate and effective pain care. This vision has guided the board of directors as they developed the strategic plans and goals of the Academy. During the past year, the academy has diligently pursued and achieved many of these goals. One such goal was to increase funding sources. I am pleased to say that the foundation is up and running with the mission of expanding the academy’s vital work with an overarching focus to
advocate for patient safety by providing funding support to expand and enhance education and research.

We have continued in our efforts to expand our education initiatives and are proactive in fostering a national momentum to support and improve pain education. One area of particular focus is in medical school education. At the meeting, Dr. Beth Murinson, the Medical School Subcommittee Chair, discussed key findings of the significant changes that are needed in medical student education. The next step is to develop a plan to improve these deficits.

I am also pleased to announce American Academy of Pain Medicine’s (AAPM’s) state-of-the-art, comprehensive textbook of pain medicine that was just published. Under the editorial stewardship of pain medicine specialists appointed by the Academy, this multidisciplinary text is organized around pharmacologic, interventional, and integrative approaches that reflect the Academy’s clinical guidelines and core curriculum. AAPM board member Dr. Timothy Deer served as editor-in-chief and Dr. Michael Leong as associate editor-in-chief. I want thank them for leading this significant endeavor of the academy. I would also like to thank the associate editors and the 160 plus contributors to this remarkable project. Details on purchasing a copy are available on the AAPM Website.

I would also like take this opportunity to thank the executive committee and board of directors, Phil Saigh, the executive director, and the AAPM staff, as well as you, the members, who were all instrumental in this past year’s accomplishments. I also want to thank my fellow colleagues at Baylor College of Medicine who afforded me the privilege to dedicate time to my role as president. And finally, thank you to my wife Ellen and my two children who have given up so much to allow me to pursue my career, to which I am very thankful.

My mission as president was to complete items that were initiated by former leadership and explore new areas for future perusal. I would be remiss not to acknowledge and thank the past presidents that have served the academy. You have built the foundation on which we have continued to pursue the academy’s vision and mission, and we thank you for your contributions.

As we move forward in 2013, let’s continue to focus on the mission and vision of the academy. I am confident that both you and the patients you treat will benefit from your involvement in the academy. Please make the most of the opportunities available to you because now more than ever, people with pain need your clinical expertise.

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